Mrs. Cowles

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IN MEMORIAM.

Mrs. Minerva Dayton Penfield Cowles, wife of Rev. Henry Cowles, passed from earthly suffering to heavenly rest, November 29, 1880, aged 80 years and 8 months. Bronchitis, involving fearful cough and extremely laborious breathing, was the messenger of God to call her away. Her end was perfect peace

Brief funeral exercises at the house December 1st, brought together all the living children of this family, except her youngest, residing in Brooklyn, N. Y. The ensuing Sabbath morning hour in the church, of which she had been a member since its organization, was devoted to a memorial service, in which the following paper was read by President J. H. Fairchild.

Mrs. COWLES.

EVERY human life has its lesson for the world, and it is the privilege of each community to review these personal histories as they reach their earthly close and gather up the treasures which they have brought us.

Mrs. Cowles, whose long and useful life has been completed during the past week, was among the early settlers of Oberlin, the *Colonists*, as they were called in the early times. She was born in Connecticut, April 4, 1800, and her maiden name was Minerva Dayton. At the age of 21, she was married to Anson Penfield and their home was in Alden, New York, a few miles east of Buffalo. In December, 1834, the second year of Oberlin, they joined the enterprise here, making the journey from New York in a covered wagon, bringing with them five children, the oldest eight years of age. Between Elyria and Oberlin, the roads were impassable, and leaving their wagon fast in the mud they mounted the two horses, with their children before and behind, and thus

reached the place. They built their home on South Main street, near its present intersection with Mechanic street. Mr. Penfield was a mechanic, a manufacturer of edge tools, and used a grind-stone moved by steam power in the basement of the mill. In 1838, a little more than three years after his coming to Oberlin, he was one day caught by a band of his machinery and instantly killed, leaving the mother with her six children, and little besides their home. It was a call for all the courage, and strength, and faith which God ever gives his children; and there was no failure. During the six following years, she carried the family forward alone, keeping her little flock about her, teaching them in these early years to help themselves and bear their part of the family burdens. During these years she was called to bury two of her children—Mary, the elder of her two daughters, from sudden sickness, and Herbert, her second son, by an accident which befell him in his work; but with unshaken confidence in the faithfulness of God, she held on her way.

In 1844 Professor Cowles found himself with five motherless children, three daughters and two sons, the oldest thirteen and the youngest four years of age, looking up to him, in great need of a mother's care and love. That he sought

any human counsel I do not know, but the entire community approved his judgment when he asked Mrs. Penfield to unite her family with his, and take the entire flock into her motherly embrace. No arrangement in human affairs could have been more successful, no sharing of advantages more equal. There were five children on one side and four on the other, and to remove this inequality, a year after the families were united, Minerva Dayton, a niece of Mrs. Cowles, fifteen years of age, was adopted into the family and educated as a daughter. Thus the composite family circle embraced ten children, five sons and five daughters, ranging from four to eighteen years; and not one of these ten children ever had occasion to consider who had the best right or the place of favor in that household. The question seems never to have arisen; and it was a rare combination of wisdom and goodness under the Divine favor which secured the result. At the beginning there were indeed some signs of difficulty. Miss Helen, thirteen years of age, had no disposition to be pleased with a second mother, however much she might need one, but she yielded soon most cheerfully to the gentle and helpful hand extended to her in her need, and during the remaining six years of her life, no daughter could have been more loyal and

devoted. A little volume entitled "Grace Victorious," compiled by Mrs. Cowles, illustrates the striking transformation.

More than thirty-six years have passed since that family was thus organized, and out of that household life a volume of history has unfolded, every page of it a record of parental faithfulness, and its rewards under the promise of the God of Abraham.

Let us call over the names of the children as they stand on the family record, in the order of their age. All became disciples of the Master in their early years, and all completed courses of study in the College, except two who were called to pursue their course in a higher school.

Charles Penfield graduated in 1847, was at once appointed tutor in languages and continued as tutor and afterward professor in the College until 1870, 23 years. He is now professor of Greek in the Cleveland High School. Three of his children have been in College here. One daughter graduated, and has been three years a missionary in China.

Josephine Penfield graduated from the Ladies' Course in 1847, married Rev. Richards Cushman in 1848, and went at once with him as a missionary to the island of Hayti. After one short year she buried her husband alone, conduct-

ing the funeral services herself among the poor people gathered about the mission, and embarked for home on a ship without a female attendant, passing through experiences on the voyage too touching and sacred to relate, and winning the love and reverence of the rough sailors by her fortitude and grace and high Christian character. She is now Mrs. Bateham of Painesville, a name that is a strong endorsement and support of every good cause. One daughter has graduated here, and another is now in the College.

Minerva Dayton, the adopted daughter, graduated in 1850, married Rev. Franklin L. Arnold the same year and went with him to the Mendi Mission in West Africa. She died in the first year of her missionary life. Her grave is one of a group of graves of Oberlin students on the Western coast of the "Dark Continent," waiting for the illumination of the darkness by the Gospel light, and for the morning of the resurrection.

Helen Cowles pursued a course of study in the College, interrupting it a year to teach in Cincinnati, but died of disease of the lungs in the last year of her course, in the 20th year of her age. She developed a beautiful Christian character, and "was not, for God took her."

Henry Cowles took a select course in the College, married and went to Kansas when the territory was first opened to settlement, fought through the border war and helped to establish a free State. He died in that State ten years ago, and his children are here with us under their mother's care to take their course in the schools and the College.

Thornton Bigelow Penfield took the course in College and in the Theological School, and went as a missionary to the colored people in Jamaica in 1858, having married a daughter of David S. Ingraham, an early student of Oberlin, and more than any other man, the founder of the American Mission in Jamaica. After the death of his wife in 1864, Mr. Penfield returned to this country and took an appointment under the American Board to the Madura Mission in India, where he died of cholera in 1871. A daughter of his has grown up here under her grandmother's care.

John Cowles took the full course here in College and Seminary, entering the ministry in 1859, has been pastor of the Congregational churches in Bellevue and Mansfield, Ohio, and in East Saginaw, Michigan. By a misfortune under professional treatment, he has been compelled to lay aside preaching, and is now a successful man of business and a

pillar in church and society at Cleveland. He is a trustee of the College here, and two daughters are with us in a course of study.

Smith Penfield graduated here in 1858. He was a successful student, but music was his delight; and after preparing himself for the professsion in the conservatories of Germany, he devoted himself to the work of instruction in this country, and is now an organist and teacher in Brooklyn, New York.

Sarah Cowles graduated from College in 1859, and afterward married Mr. Little, Superintendent of the State Institution for the Blind, Wisconsin. Upon the death of her husband four years ago, she was placed at the head of the Institution—a position which she still holds—at present, I believe, the only lady in the country sustaining such a responsibility.

Mary Cowles, the youngest of the family group, entered upon a College course, but died of consumption in her Junior year, 1859, not yet 20 years old. The simple announcement from her father at the next weekly prayer meeting was, "Mary is safe."

The life of the Mother in Israel who has just gone from among us, wrought powerfully upon all these lives to fashion

and inspire them; and the work would seem enough for one human life. But the energy and the wisdom and the love were not all exhausted within the circle of the household, Mrs. Cowles, through all these years, was an earnest worker in every good cause, and all the great interests of the church and the community felt her influence. The ten children did not fill her spacious home, and many other young people found shelter and help and inspiration under her roof. She was a vigorous and effective writer, and many a column of experience and suggestion appeared in "The Oberlin Evangelist," with the signature "M. D. P. C." From 1844 to 1870, she was a member of the Ladies' Board in the College, and for many years every graduating class of young women had the help of her counsels and wisdom. It was no brilliancy of genius that gave her such wide influence, but clear discernment, a large-hearted interest in all around her, and faith in God.

During these last years she has been an invalid and often a great sufferer, but her faith in God has remained unshaken in the midst of suffering. The day before her death she was heard to say, "My dear Savior, how much thou must have loved me;" and her last intelligible words were,

"I have tried to serve my Heavenly Father faithfully through a long life." So said a saint of old: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing."